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**Name of Organization:** Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission

**Type of Organization:** Interstate Agency or Commission

**Contact Information:** Mr. Dennis Dreher

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**Project Title:** Biodiversity Protection and Enhancement Technical Assistance

**Project Category:** Habitat (Ecological) Protection and Rest

**Rank by Organization (if applicable):** 0

**Total Funding Requested (\$):** 25,805 **Project Duration:** 1 Years

**Abstract:**

The biodiversity of the Lake Michigan Basin is disappearing as conversion of natural areas to urban and agricultural uses fragments and disrupts habitats and natural processes. To complement the efforts of state and federal agencies, numerous local strategies exist to protect and enhance the biodiversity of the Lake Michigan Basin, including planning, zoning, land acquisition, natural area management and restoration, improved stormwater and wastewater management, natural landscaping, and education. Successful implementation of these strategies is highly dependent on local government entities under whose jurisdiction most land in the basin falls. Unfortunately, many of these entities are largely uninformed about how to develop appropriate strategies for their communities. In the Chicago metropolitan region, however, a consortium of organizations, through an initiative called Chicago Wilderness, has produced the "Biodiversity Recovery Plan" documenting the state of the region's ecosystems and the actions necessary to recover them. Implementation of the recommendations of the plan has already begun with the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission's (NIPC) "Protecting Nature in Your Community: A Guidebook for Preserving and Enhancing Biodiversity" intended for local government audiences. This guidebook describes numerous techniques for protecting and enhancing biodiversity, their benefits, and local examples of successful implementation of the techniques. NIPC proposes to leverage biodiversity protection efforts in northeastern Illinois to other regional governments in the Lake Michigan Basin by (1) disseminating its template and providing technical assistance for the development of other regional guides, (2) coordinating the production of an online biodiversity protection document, and (3) linking this document to other online biodiversity resources and tools.

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**Geographic Areas Affected by the Project**

**States:**

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Illinois	<input type="checkbox"/> New York
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Indiana	<input type="checkbox"/> Pennsylvania
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Michigan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Wisconsin
<input type="checkbox"/> Minnesota	<input type="checkbox"/> Ohio

**Lakes:**

<input type="checkbox"/> Superior	<input type="checkbox"/> Erie
<input type="checkbox"/> Huron	<input type="checkbox"/> Ontario
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Michigan	<input type="checkbox"/> All Lakes

**Geographic Initiatives:**

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Greater Chicago	<input type="checkbox"/> NE Ohio	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NW Indiana	<input type="checkbox"/> SE Michigan	<input type="checkbox"/> Lake St. Clair
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**Primary Affected Area of Concern:** Not Applicable

**Other Affected Areas of Concern:**

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***For Habitat Projects Only:***

**Primary Affected Biodiversity Investment Area:** Chicago Wilderness

**Other Affected Biodiversity Investment Areas:** Door County Peninsula  
Green Bay Western Shore  
Northern Lake Michigan

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**Problem Statement:**

The blend of ecosystems that evolved within the Lake Michigan Basin is unique. Unfortunately, many of these ecosystems are substantially degraded due to fragmentation, elimination of fire from the landscape, introduction of invasive non-native species, and disruption of natural hydrology. Urban and agricultural development further threatens to decimate and degrade the remaining natural areas.

Fortunately, a number of effective strategies exist to protect, enhance, and restore the biodiversity of the Lake Michigan Basin, including comprehensive planning, zoning regulations, land acquisition, natural area management and restoration, improved stormwater and wastewater management, natural landscaping, and education. These strategies have proven very effective in protecting natural diversity where there has been an informed and dedicated local government entity to implement them. Local governments - counties, townships, municipalities, park districts, and other entities - are especially relevant since most land is within their jurisdictions. Thus, the key to recovering biodiversity in the Lake Michigan Basin is to empower local governments with the tools they need to take effective action.

In response to the multiple threats to biodiversity in northeastern Illinois, an initiative called Chicago Wilderness has produced the "Biodiversity Recovery Plan," which outlines steps to protect and restore the natural communities of the Chicago region in order to enrich the quality of life of its citizens and to contribute to the preservation of global biodiversity. To complement and facilitate the implementation of the recommendations of the plan, the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission (NIPC) has produced a guidebook for local governments to assist them in preserving and enhancing biodiversity by using the strategies mentioned above. For each of the techniques, the guidebook provides background, recommended approaches, a summary of benefits, local examples of successful implementation, and sources of additional information. This guidebook provides a model for other regional agencies to use in developing guidebooks for protecting biodiversity in their regions using local examples as evidence that the recommended techniques can and do work.

An initiative such as this is rare, and few regions of the country have taken such progressive steps to protect their natural heritage. Expanding and dispersing the model developed by NIPC will address a number of goals and objectives of the Great Lakes National Program Office: (1) protecting and restoring vital habitats in a number of the states of the Lake Biodiversity Investment Areas; and (2) protecting biological integrity; restoring and maintaining diverse living populations.

Specific habitat priorities addressed by this proposal include: (1) protect ecosystems possessing ecological importance, ecological integrity, biodiversity, or rare ecological occurrences from adverse impacts of anthropogenic stressors; and (2) restore physical processes, ecological structures, and functions to formerly degraded ecosystems that have the potential to be ecologically significant.

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The proposal addresses two sub-goals of the Lake Michigan Lakewide Management Plan: Subgoal 4: All habitats are healthy, naturally diverse, and sufficient to sustain viable biological communities; and Subgoal 8: Exotic species are controlled and managed. The proposal will help achieve these subgoals through information sharing, collaboration, and stewardship.

**Proposed Work Outcome:**

The Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission proposes to leverage biodiversity efforts of northeastern Illinois to other regional governments in the Lake Michigan Basin through the attainment of three specific tasks:

**TASK 1.** Using its guidebook for protecting and enhancing biodiversity as a model, NIPC will provide technical assistance and impetus for regional agencies to produce biodiversity protection programs and guidelines appropriate to their region. The target agencies would thus be enabled to provide guidance and training to their constituent local governments, who often lack specific knowledge and background about why and how biodiversity protection can be factored into decisions made on the local level. Specifically, local governments need to be informed about the variety of options that are available for protecting what remains of our natural heritage, how to develop appropriate strategies for their communities, the community benefits of implementing those options, and how and where these techniques are being locally utilized. It is expected that by convening the appropriate agencies and groups to customize a plan, an additional outgrowth will be the creation of partnerships and coalitions, as has been done in northeastern Illinois by Chicago Wilderness. Coalitions can then guide advances in the effort to protect biodiversity.

In the case of the Muskegon Conservation District in western Michigan, NIPC will help develop an appendix to their proposed "Biodiversity Atlas and Restoration Guidebook." This appendix will provide biodiversity protection techniques, local examples, and contact information for the region.

TASK 1 will require the following sub-tasks:

- 1.1 Contact appropriate regional entities, relevant stakeholders, and potential partners to construct an effective coalition for addressing the biodiversity issue in each of the participating regions.
- 1.2 Develop presentation and training materials to assist regional entities during technical assistance sessions.
- 1.3 Convene initial on-site meetings to present and discuss the NIPC/Chicago Wilderness model, and to provide them with materials to initiate the development of a regional guidebook, including the methodology for producing the NIPC template.
- 1.4 As time and funds permit, conduct additional technical sessions to develop specific case study information and ecosystem-appropriate tools, and provide research, writing, and editing assistance.

**TASK 2.** NIPC will coordinate the production of a Lake Michigan-wide document to be published on the EPA GLNPO website as a tool for planners seeking to develop biodiversity protection measures in their communities. This document will use the NIPC guidebook as its core, and will be supplemented with appendices relevant to the other states and regions within the Lake Michigan Basin. Additional information will include local examples of the successful implementation of biodiversity protection techniques, and contact information for agencies and organizations providing technical assistance to local governments. NIPC will perform the following sub-task:

- 2.1 Coordinate and compile information from participating regional agencies for the online document.

**TASK 3.** NIPC will link the development of the online document described above to the proposed online atlas of habitats of the Lake Michigan Basin, and to the biodiversity software being developed as part of a SeaGrant project. By linking these projects, EPA website users will have access to an array of scientific and policy information to use in addressing the biodiversity issue.

Funding for fiscal year 2000-2001 provided by the US EPA and the Great Lakes National Program Office will help accomplish these goals by (1) facilitating rapid expansion and dispersal of the model created by NIPC and Chicago Wilderness; (2) creating coalitions to address the biodiversity issue in other regions of the Lake Michigan Basin; (3)

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initiating faster action by local entities to achieve essential biodiversity protection results on the ground; and (4) developing web tools to assist with biodiversity protection.

NIPC proposes to assist each of the four regional entities that have agreed to participate in this effort. These funds will support NIPC staff in providing technical assistance to regional entities participating in the project and in coordinating the effort to create a web document accessible to a large audience. These funds are not intended to fund original research, which has already been done by NIPC. Nor are these funds intended to fund production of other regional documents, for which additional partners and/or funding sources should be sought by cooperating entities.

**Project Milestones:**

**Dates:**

Project Start	10/2000
Develop materials and presentation	12/2000
Final preliminary meeting session	02/2001
Final follow-up technical session	05/2001
Complete online information compilation	08/2001
Submit final online document	10/2001
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Project End	10/2001

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☐ Project Addresses Environmental Justice

**If So, Description of How:**

☒ Project Addresses Education/Outreach

**If So, Description of How:**

This project involves an educational and outreach function by providing technical assistance to regional agencies within the Lake Michigan Basin to help them develop coalitions and guidelines that will help local governments protect Lake Michigan Basin biodiversity.

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**Project Budget:**

	<b>Federal Share Requested (\$)</b>	<b>Applicant's Share (\$)</b>
<b>Personnel:</b>	11,000	0
<b>Fringe:</b>	2,145	0
<b>Travel:</b>	1,000	0
<b>Equipment:</b>	0	0
<b>Supplies:</b>	0	0
<b>Contracts:</b>	0	0
<b>Construction:</b>	0	0
<b>Other:</b>	0	0
<b>Total Direct Costs:</b>	14,145	0
<b>Indirect Costs:</b>	11,660	0
<b>Total:</b>	25,805	0
<b>Projected Income:</b>	0	0

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**Funding by Other Organizations (Names, Amounts, Description of Commitments):**

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**Description of Collaboration/Community Based Support:**

The following agencies have agreed to participate in the proposed project:

Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission  
Contact: Dan Gardner

Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission  
Contact: Donald M. Reed

Department of Urban and Regional Studies at the University of Wisconsin at Green Bay  
Contact: Ron Baba

Muskegon Conservation District, Michigan  
Contact: Kathy Evans